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ABSTRACT

A study examined parents' attitudes toward reading and their children's reading problems, to investigate whether a child's reading problem may simply be a reflection of his or her parent's reading know-how. Subjects, 203 of 218 parents of children attending a university reading clinic, responded to a survey. Data were collected over the course of eight reading clinic sessions held at the Indiana University Southeast campus in New Albany, Indiana. Results indicated that: (1) parents who brought their children to the reading clinic tended to believe that their child had a "medium" reading problem; (2) the parents appeared to use the library very little; and (3) parents read to and were read to by their children very little. Findings suggest that parents need more tips and strategies to help their children with reading problems. (Five tables of data are included.) (RS)

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DO CHILDREN COME BY THEIR READING PROBLEMS HONESTLY?

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DO CHILDREN COME BY THEIR READING PROBLEMS HONESTLY?

It is often assumed that a child's reading problem may simply be a reflection of his/her parent's reading know-how. To see if that notion holds true, parents of children attending a university reading clinic were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their personal attitudes toward reading as well as information about their child's reading problem.

Subjects and Design Format

Two hundred three out of 218 parents responded to the survey, a 93% return rate. The data were collected over the course of eight reading clinic sessions held at the Indiana University Southeast campus in New Albany, Indiana.

Parents were first asked about the amount of personal reading in which they engaged. See Table 1 for their responses.

Insert Table 1

As can be seen, 14.3% said they read less than one hour per week, 31.5% said they read 1-3 hours per week, 28.1% said they read 4-6 hours per week and 26.1% said they read 7 or more hours per week. Fifteen parents chose not to respond to this item.

The parents were then asked how often they read to their child. (No clock time was attached to this question.) Over one fourth of the parents read to their child less than one time per week with less than 6% of them reading seven or more times per week. For the complete information, see Table 2.

Insert Table 2

Clearly a majority of the parents read very little to their child each week.

In response to an item that asked how often the child read to the parent, almost one fifth of the parents said less than once a week and about eight percent answered seven or more times per week. See Table 3.

Insert Table 3

As is evident, these parents were not spending much time listening to their child read.

The parents were, for the most part, not strong library patrons either. One fourth never went to the library and an additional 38.6% went less than once a month.

The parents were then asked to classify their child's reading problem and then to determine how the child's teacher most likely would classify the child's problem. See Tables 4 and 5 for the responses.

Insert Tables 4 and 5

The majority of the children's parents believed their child's problem fell somewhere between mild and severe, and they believed the child's teacher would condone their evaluation.

Discussion

Parents who bring their children to the Indiana University Southeast Reading Clinic tend to believe their child has a "medium" reading problem. This might indicate the parents' desire to address any small problems before they develop into anything more significant. The parents appear to use the library very little and read and be read to by their children very little.

Most likely these parents' habits are far more mature than the parents of the entire population of children with reading problems. The clients' parents had gone the extra mile to quickly file forms to enable their child to attend the clinic, and then they had sacrificed time transporting their child to and from the clinic. In addition, parents of children who had previously participated in the clinic had an opportunity to attend a parental workshop by the clinic director and conferences with the reading clinicians. During the workshop, strategies were discussed and positive reading tips given. Also, during conferences with parents,

the clinicians urged parents to read to their child and go to the library. So, those parents whose children were repeating the clinic (over one third of the respondents) should have inflated the statistics. Obviously the advice given did not totally alter parents' habits.

Comments

What can be done to further assist parents to help their children with reading?

While many of these parents attended a workshop, it was only of short duration and a "one time" commitment; it appears that parents need more tips and strategies to help their children with reading problems. Such information could be disseminated via newsletters, multiple workshops, handouts, radio announcements or other pertinent means of communications. Parents need to understand the importance of modeling mature reading habits and attitudes. Only if parents understand and are aware of the value of such modeling of attitudes and habits, and only if they are willing to become a model, will their child have the full opportunity of being enriched by the printed word.

TABLE 1

Question: How much personal reading do you do?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 hour	A	29	13.3	14.3	14.3
1-3 hours	B	64	29.4	31.5	45.8
4-6 hours	C	57	26.1	28.1	73.9
7 or more	D	53	24.3	26.1	100.0
		15	6.9	MISSING	
	TOTAL	218	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 2

Question: How much do you read to your child?

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 time per week	58	26.6	28.7	28.7
1-3 times per week	95	43.6	47.0	75.7
4-6 times per week	37	17.0	18.3	94.1
7 or more per week	12	5.5	5.9	100.0
	16	7.3	MISSING	
TOTAL	218	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 3

Question: How often does your child read orally to you or someone in your home?

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 time	37	17.0	18.2	18.2
1-3 times	100	45.9	49.3	67.5
4-6 times	50	22.9	24.6	92.1
7 or more	16	7.3	7.9	100.0
	15	6.9	MISSING	
TOTAL	218	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 4

Question: How do you classify your child's reading problem?

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No real problem	8	3.7	4.0	4.0
mild	56	25.7	27.7	31.7
medium	113	51.8	55.9	87.6
severe	25	11.5	12.4	100.0
	16	7.3	MISSING	
TOTAL	218	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 5

Question: How you think your child's teacher would classify your child's reading problem?

Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No real problem	8	3.7	4.0	4.0
mild	63	28.9	31.3	35.3
medium	104	47.7	51.7	87.1
severe	26	11.9	12.9	100.0
	17	7.8	MISSING	
TOTAL	218	100.0	100.0	